

TOWN MEETING COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Fiscal Year 2007

The Town Meeting Coordinating Committee (TMCC) had its beginning in 2004 as an outgrowth of the Town Meeting Improvements Committee of 2003. Inclusion in the Town Bylaws for TMCC as a permanent committee of Town Meeting was voted by the Fall Town Meeting of 2005. Its seven members are elected from Town Meeting by Town Meeting members. The first duty of TMCC is to provide continuing leadership and organization to Town Meeting and to extend outreach to the community on behalf of Town Meeting. The duties of TMCC include but are not limited to the following:

1. organizing warrant forums prior to Town Meeting open to the public
2. communicating to the public about Town Meeting through various means
3. taking responsibility for the education and orientation for new members.

The Committee performs such other duties as determined by Town Meeting.

During the past year, TMCC met twenty times, working to help Town Meeting function effectively as the legislative body of the Town of Amherst.

Special Fall Town Meeting

A Warrant Review for Town Meeting members was jointly sponsored by TMCC and The League of Women Voters of Amherst on October 25 in the Middle School Auditorium. Articles were explained by sponsors. The meeting was broadcast live and rebroadcast several times on ACTV Channel 17. TMCC did not organize precinct meetings, but urged members of precincts to meet. Nearly all of the precincts did hold meetings.

Annual Town Meeting

In January, members of TMCC attended a Select Board meeting to publicly urge residents to run for Town Meeting seats in their precincts and to request that the Select Board complete and sign the Warrant earlier than in the past, in order to allow for planning the April 18 Warrant Review Meeting organized by TMCC and the League of Women Voters of Amherst. Notices of the date of the Warrant Review were sent to all committees and boards in order to prevent conflicts with important meetings. The timely signing of the Warrant was very helpful in planning coverage for warrant articles to be reviewed. The Town Meeting Moderator opened the Warrant Review with an orientation for new Town Meeting members. The Warrant Review was broadcast live and rebroadcast on ACTV Channel 17 during the 2 weeks before Town Meeting. We continue to discuss how to make Warrant Reviews helpful to Town Meeting members.

TMCC provided materials for the two mailings to Town Meeting members, including a list of three scheduled events to prepare them for Town Meeting, a reminder to sign up for the TMCC subscription list, a brochure summarizing the Town Government Act and directions on how to run for membership in TMCC in the election during Town Meeting.

A bus tour for Town Meeting members to view 10 sites related to Town Meeting articles was held on April 21. These tours are very popular, but funding is uncertain.

On April 24, TMCC sponsored a budget orientation. The Town Manager, Finance Director, Chair of the Finance Committee and School Superintendent explained the formation of the budget and their roles and responsibilities in the process. Although the meeting was planned for

new Town Meeting members, many older members attended. The meeting was covered live by ACTV and rebroadcast several times. This meeting was very well received by both Town Meeting members and the public.

Again, TMCC did not organize precinct meetings but urged precincts to hold meetings, which they did between April 26 and May 5. In the coming year we hope to become active again in the organization of precinct meetings.

Planning to improve the distribution of information to Town Meeting members

TMCC continues to strive to educate Town Meeting members on issues coming before Town Meeting by making information easily available. We solicit new subscribers to the TMCC Subscription List so that more Town Meeting members may receive hopefully helpful and timely information on articles prior to sessions. A subcommittee recommended ways to make information and resources available on the Town web site. A meeting was held with the president of ACTV to urge improved access to Town government programs with more reliable program schedules. Although individual members of TMCC may have strong views on articles, TMCC is dedicated to remaining neutral in providing information.

Establishing a process for handling suggestions to improve Town Meeting

TMCC has welcomed many suggestions regarding the functioning of Town Meeting. Suggestions and concerns for the Moderator were reviewed and sent to him. In response to complaints about lighting for Town Meeting in the Middle School auditorium, adjustments were made. It is hoped that plans for improved, more permanent wiring for Town Meeting will be realized in the coming year.

A process was adopted to acknowledge the receipt of suggestions, to determine the ability of TMCC to make suggested changes and to prioritize action. For suggestions that require action beyond the limited powers of TMCC, we will reply with directions to appropriate levels of government.

TMCC Members

Margaret R. Roberts, Chair
Mary Wentworth, Vice-Chair to June 20
Stephanie O'Keeffe, Secretary
Philip S. Jackson, Stacker
H. Oldham Brooks to June 20
Otto L. Stein
Merrylees Turner to June 20
Hwei-Ling Greeney, Select Board Liaison

Elected by Annual Town Meeting May 21, 2007

H. Oldham Brooks
Carol Jeannette Gray
Judy L. Simpson